

LOADSTAR LETTER

"The Biggest, The Best" • Since 1984 • Number 9 • April 1994

Commodore In Financial Trouble

03/28/94 NEW YORK, NEW YORK, U.S.A., 1994 MAR 28 (NB) -- Commodore International Ltd., has reported an \$8.2 million loss in its second quarter and admitted it is at risk of financial collapse.

A statement from Commodore said the computer maker, once one of the PC industry's leaders, is trying to negotiate a restructuring plan with creditors. "The Company continues to suffer from inadequate liquidity and there can be no assurance that the company can attract additional financial resources and complete a successful restructuring," said the statement. "In the absence of additional resources and a restructuring, the company may become subject to reorganization or other liquidation proceedings."

A subsidiary, Commodore Business Machines (Australia), of Sydney, was placed in liquidation early in March, with total debts in the neighborhood of AUS\$3 million (about US\$2 million).

In December, the Canadian subsidiary, Commodore Business Machines Ltd. of Toronto, turned over commercial sales and marketing of its Intel-based PC line to a Toronto-area company, 3D Microcomputers Wholesale and Distribution (Canada) Inc. Subsidiary President Doug MacGregor said the company was finding it hard to compete in the Intel-based PC market and wanted to concentrate on its proprietary Amiga line and its CD32 game machine. He said similar moves were being made by other Commodore subsidiaries.

Commodore's CD-TV, a home entertainment device built around compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM) and the works of an Amiga computer, did poorly in the market. The company has been hoping the newer CD32 would make a better showing.

However, Commodore International's statement said poor economic conditions and a weak game market have hurt sales of the CD32, while the company's financial problems have constrained sales of all its products in the past quarter. Sales of the Amiga 1200 computer strengthened, officials said.

Commodore's quarterly loss is actually smaller than in the corresponding period last year, but sales have also dropped substantially.

In the quarter ended December 31, Commodore

lost \$8.2 million, or 25 cents per share, on sales of \$70.1 million. This compares with a net loss of \$77.2 million, or \$2.33 per share, on sales of \$237.7 million in the second quarter last year.

In the six months ended December 31, the company reported a \$17.9 million or 54 cents-per-share net loss on sales of \$152.7 million. In the first half of last year, Commodore lost \$96.0 million, or \$2.90 per share, on sales of \$396.3 million.

In footnotes to its quarterly financial statements, Commodore noted that it is in non-compliance with note agreements on \$33 million in senior notes held by two institutional lenders, and a waiver from the lenders expired January 31.

The company also said some suppliers have limited its credit and begun legal action.

A company controlled by Commodore's chairman, Irving Gould, has loaned \$7.5 million to the company and advanced another \$9.9 million to buy components used in producing Commodore products. The \$7.5 million loan is secured by accounts receivable and inventory, officials said, and the \$9.9 million advance has led to added secured indebtedness to the chairman's company. (Grant Buckler/19940328/Press Contact: Hock Tan. Commodore, 215-431-9100)

Compton's Multimedia Patent Overturned

03/25/94 ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND, U.S.A., 1994 MAR 25 (NB) -- Patent and Trademark Commissioner Bruce Lehman has reversed the Compton's NewMedia multimedia patent, rejecting all 41 claims. The November announcement by the Tribune subsidiary of its claims for royalties on any system that combined sound, images, and text stirred up a hornet's nest of protest in the computer industry.

In August of 1993, Compton's was issued a patent number 5,241,671 for the "Multimedia search system using a plurality of entry path means which indicate inter relatedness of information." The patent essentially said Compton's invented multimedia, but the company waited until the computer trade show Comdex to announce the patent and a royalty payment schedule.

The USPTO said strong reaction to the patent, in

part, prompted the re-examination although the office declined to comment on other factors involved. At the forefront of the fight was the Interactive Multimedia Association (IMA), a trade group with 260 member companies.

The patent office has come under sharp criticism for issuing "broad, non-technical patents" and the Compton's patent isn't the first. The office is also re-examining a similar patent granted to educational multimedia software developer Optical Data Corporation (ODC) of New Jersey for "Curriculum planning and publishing methods," which has also come under fire.

Philip Dodds, executive director of the IMA said, "Commissioner Bruce Lehman and the USPTO are to be commended for taking this action. Their willingness to re-examine overly broad patents is certainly encouraging."

As part of the re-examination process, the USPTO held public hearings in San Jose, California and Arlington, Virginia. Some concern was expressed by the IMA that multimedia publishers not present all their evidence at the hearings, as it would then not be admissible in court should some of the Compton's claims be upheld by the USPTO.

However, that didn't happen as all 41 of Compton's claims were overturned. Most of the claims were rejected based on the submission of The Hypercard Handbook along with several previous patents as examples of prior art. "This is a real victory for developers and publishers of multimedia titles," Dodds asserted.

As a preventative measure in issuing overly broad computer software patents, the IMA is recommending some steps be taken. The trade group said it would like to see better trained examiners in the section of the USPTO that reviews the software patent applications, an improved

software prior art database available to examiners and the public, and pre-grant publication of patent applications to open the patent process up to public view.

(Linda Rohrbough/19940325/Press Contact: Ruth Ford, United States Department of Commerce Patent and Trademark Office, tel 703-305-8600, fax 703-305-8240; David Kaufer, Kaufer Miller Communications for the Interactive Multimedia Association, tel 206-450-9965, fax 206-450-9963; Ken Christie, Interactive Multimedia Association, 410-626-1380)

Commodore Australia Is No More

03/11/94 SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, 1994 MAR 11 (NB) -- Commodore Business Machines (Australia), the one-time big shot of mass market personal computing, has gone into liquidation following a creditor's meeting last week. Accountant firm Ferrier-Hodgson confirmed the company was put into liquidation last Friday.

Hodgson's Max Donnelly was called in last month to act as administrator when it became insolvent after Westpac Bank indicated it would not roll over CBM's bills. The total debt is believed to be around AUS\$3M (US\$2M) with a similar amount owed to Commodore International.

In mid-February Commodore Australia was put up for sale although the Australian distribution rights for Commodore computers were not included in the offer. Ferrier-Hodgson said there were potential takers but the decision was made to liquidate the company. Most of the warehouse stock has been sold off.

From now on distribution of Commodore Amiga computers will be handled by Commodore Asia Pacific, headed by Pat Byrne who was MD of the failed Commodore Australia. He said he has no financial interest in Commodore Asia Pacific, Commodore Australia, or the company which will service Commodore machines from now on, Compu-Aid.

Industry observers say the new company appears to have obtained the stock of the failed company, so supply should not be

a problem. They also noted that during the past few weeks there have been stories of dealers receiving Commodore computers without insides, or even boxes without computers. (Stuart Kennedy, CDN and Paul Zucker/19940311)

Intel Cries Foul In Pentium-PowerPC Demo At CeBit

03/25/94 HANOVER, GERMANY, 1994 MAR 25 (NB) -- How do you know when you've got a product that has the competition worried? The answer, according to IBM and Motorola, is when your PowerPC technology beats Intel's Pentium chipset in a side-by-side comparison.

Intel appears to have been so upset at IBM and Motorola's PowerPC display at the CeBit Computer Faire, which closed this week after a seven-day run, that it brought in its legal bigwigs to stop the demonstration at the end of the show.

IBM and Motorola were staging a Pentium and PowerPC set of benchmark comparisons running on their stands. IBM compared an Apple PowerPC and a Pentium-based PC running the same Windows 3.1 application, while Motorola compared the two machines running under the Windows NT operating system environment.

With the backing of its lawyers, Intel approached IBM and Motorola with the claim that product comparisons of this type were illegal in Germany. Intel's senior vice president for corporate strategy, quoted in Computer Weekly today, said: "It wasn't a fair comparison."

According to Intel, the comparison was unfair since it was promoting die size, chip cost, and

Continued on page 4

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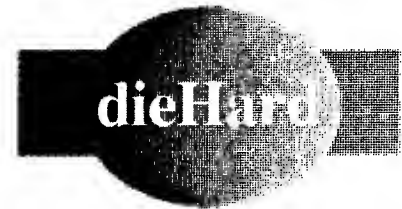
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Disks A Decade Old? Maybe You Should Copy Them And Avoid Using The Original

This is new territory. We received a call from a subscriber who used a copy protected program. He was never able to back it up, and used it for almost ten years. Suddenly he was getting disk errors, not just just on said disk, but *all* disks. A technician had to scrub a patch of glue and disk media off of the 1541 head. It had become unglued from the disk, and wouldn't you know it -- *stuck* to his head. All disks are not made alike. This warning may not apply to Kodak Disks but maybe to bargain basement disks.



dieHard March 1994

"The Flyer For Commodore 8-bitters"

March's issue contained the usual potpourri of articles and features. Paving the way was their third annual reader survey. We'd like to see the results of that. They also did a head to head comparison of income three tax programs, including our own *TAX ACCOUNTANT*, by Barbara Schulak. Zowie! I do believe this is only the second time I've ever seen a *LOADSTAR* program mentioned in any magazine. They've started a CP/M column. There were type-in programs, a *Mach 128* discussion, question & answer columns and the usual tutorials and editorials. Plus, if you really squint, you can see the word "Loadstar" on the cover!



The Underground

"The 8-bit, 9-pin Commodore Mini-Mag"

The first issue of the Underground mag arrived at Softdisk, and was a pleasant surprise. It wasn't as slick as *dieHard*, but was laid out in a more orderly and consistent manner. It has the consistency that I hope to bring to the *LOADSTAR LETTER* -- one day.

The mag was 28 pages, and had many BASIC and how-to articles. There was a screen stasher and geoZone, and a ahem, I did notice two department names such as "Bits and Bytes" and "Soapbox," but we'll call off the corporate lawyers since we're nice guys.

It was a great first effort. If enough people sign on, it's sure to stay. I just hope that Scott Eggleston, the publisher, buys a 24-pin or laser printer with the proceeds.

The Underground
4574 Via Santa Maria
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1 year (six issues) \$11.00. Outside the US \$21.50

average power consumption. An Intel spokesman told Newsbytes that the fundamental problem was that IBM and Motorola were comparing their 0.6 microchip technology with an 0.8 micron Pentium chipset, despite the fact that Intel is now manufacturing 0.6 microchips.

Intel has pointed out that its 0.6 micron Pentium chipset is actually superior to the PowerPC technology on grounds of power consumption (four watts as against the PowerPC's six watts). On the pricing subject, Intel cites standard supply and demand marketing, quoting the example of the Apple Mac computer, where cheaper processors (than Intel's equivalent) are used, yet Apple charges a higher price.

Tobias Thuemmler, Motorola's marketing manager for Central Europe, meanwhile, claims that the comparisons were fair. He said that the aim of the display was to show consumers that there is an alternative to the Pentium chipset. "Intel is stung and this is a forceful reaction," he said. (Steve Gold/19940325/Press & Public Contact: Intel UK - Tel: +44- 793-696000)

Australian Computer Maker Shoots Pentium In The Foot

03/25/94 SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, 1994 MAR 25 (NB) -- There was high drama at the Regent Hotel in Sydney yesterday. Local PC manufacturer Osborne had assembled the computer press to let them in on a little secret -- there are cheaper ways of getting a fast PC than buying a Pentium.

Osborne boss John Linton went for the power switch on a new Osborne 100MHz Intel DX/4 machine. "It could go off like a grenade," he warned. Linton had just enlightened the group to some "facts, myths and outright lies" surrounding Intel's 60 and 66MHz Pentium chips, which are already under attack from Apple Computer, comparing them

unfavorably to its PowerMac machines running with Motorola PowerPC chips.

The star of the show was a lowly Osborne Intel SX/33 machine that was given a quick chip change and transformed into a fire-breathing 100MHz DX/4. To speed up the proceedings Linton made the macho move of ordering the heatsink to be left off, resulting in a near meltdown 10 minutes later.

The point of the exercise was to demonstrate that a 100MHz DX/4- equipped box is as fast, and very much cheaper than its Pentium cousin. In a speed test on a Corel Draw file the DX/4 ran at the same speed as the Pentium machine, yet there was a AUS\$1000 difference in price (around US\$720).

Linton said the 64-bit Pentium is crippled by its 32-bit PCI bus and that the 486 motherboards have the benefit of years of development and optimization. Linton said the Pentium was "ropey as hell" and that "anyone buying a Pentium chip and sticking it on a 32-bit bus is not very intelligent. But if you want to buy a Pentium, I'll sell you one!" (Stuart Kennedy and Computer Daily News/19940325)

HP Intros New 600 dpi Deskjets, Colorsmart Drivers

03/03/94 PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA, U.S.A., 1994 MAR 3 (NB) -- Hewlett-Packard has announced it is discontinuing four of its popular Deskjet printers and replacing the models with Deskjets that deliver higher print quality at twice the print resolution.

The new 600 by 300 dots-per-inch (dpi) Deskjet 520 printer replaces the company's 300 dpi Deskjet 500 model for the IBM and compatible personal computer (PC) platform. A Macintosh model, the Deskwriter 520, offers the same print quality to

Macintosh users replacing the Deskwriter printer model. Both models are \$365.

Color versions of the new printers -- the DeskJet 560C for PCs and the DeskWriter 560C for Macintosh -- offer the same print resolution as their black printer counterparts. The Deskjet 560C replace the company's Deskjet 550C model. The new models are retail priced at \$719.

The new HP models work with both plain paper and a wide variety of other types of media, including glossy paper and transparencies.

The printers also feature HP's new Colorsmart technology, which automatically makes color choices that enhance the quality of text, charts and photographs, optimizing the color for the printed page. Using object identification and automation technologies, the printer analyzes the page to recognize text, graphic and photographic elements, then sets its own controls to perform optimally for each element. HP says the end result is more vivid graphics, including more lifelike photographic images, while keeping the crispness desired for color text. Colorsmart is also compatible with application-based and operating-system-based color management systems, such as Apple Computer's Colorsync.

In black printing models, Colorsmart also can convert color to up to 256 levels of grayscale, to optimize contrast and clarity for black-and-white reproduction of color graphics and images. Users may also take advantage of a manual override function to create custom effects.

HP is also offering the Colorsmart technology to owners of its other color printers via software drivers for color printing under Microsoft Windows. The drivers are available now for owners of Deskjet 500C, 550C, and 1200C printers and PaintJet XL300 color printers. A Macintosh version of the ColorSmart

driver also is available for Deskwriter C and 550C printers. Users may order an upgrade kit from the HP Forum on CompuServe or directly from HP by calling toll-free.

HP officials said the company plans to announce Colorsmart products for Adobe's Postscript page description language with Adobe later this year as well as Windows and Macintosh software drivers for other Deskjet and Deskwriter printers this fall. A Colorsmart Windows driver for the Designjet 650C color inkjet plotter has already been announced for availability this summer.

For PCs, the Deskjet 520 and 560C printers include Centronics parallel interfaces and ship with drivers for Windows 3.1. The drivers shipped with the printers are compatible with Windows Print Manager, which reduces

lock-out time so users can return to their applications quickly after sending a print command.

For Macintosh users, the Deskwriter 520 and 560C printers include Appletalk and serial interfaces and are compatible with Systems 6.07 and above. Another \$249 buys the Postscript option adding Postscript Level 2 printing capability, HP said.

Palo Alto, California-headquartered Hewlett-Packard is the leader in the world of inkjet printers selling approximately 57 percent of all the black printing inkjet printers and 80 percent of all color inkjet printers worldwide in 1993. The company said it shipped more than five million Deskjet printers worldwide last year.

(Linda Rohrbough/19940303/Press Contact: Cathy Plant, Hewlett-Packard, tel 619-592-8546; Jeri Flinn, Copithorne & Bellows, Jeri Flinn, tel 415-966-8700, fax 415-965-7686; Public Contact: HP Sales, 800-752-0900; Colorsmart Printer Driver Order Line, HP, tel 303-353-7650, fax 800-344-4809/PHOTO)

From the home office in Shreveport! The Top Ten Reasons To Buy Jeff Jones' Smash, Soundscapes?

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9. Say, you've gotta support C-64 programmers!
8. Taxes! The IRS man has an AK-47 pointed at Jeff's head. You have to sell 400 tapes to pay his 1993 taxes!
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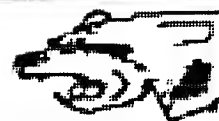
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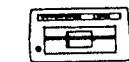
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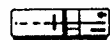
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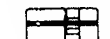
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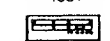
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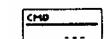
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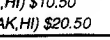
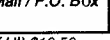
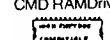
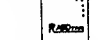
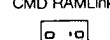
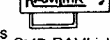
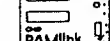
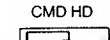
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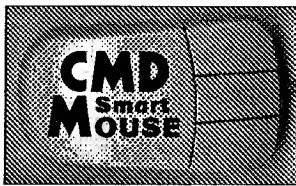
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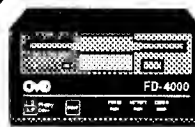
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